

# education update



STATE SENATOR 13th District

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Dear Friend:

It's time for *Back to School*, and I want to update you on some important legislative news, including our efforts to keep more money in the classroom. Please do not hesitate to call me toll-free at 877-SEN-13TH or e-mail me at [www.SenatorJohnPappageorge.com](http://www.SenatorJohnPappageorge.com) if you would like further information on any of these topics.

Education remains one of my top priorities in the FY 2007-08 state budget. Despite these tough economic times, I want you to know that we are committed to ensuring Michigan's children receive the best education we can provide. In fact, in the face of almost a \$1 billion shortfall in the current fiscal year, Senate Republicans found cuts in other programs and preserved the level of K-12 funding.

During my time in the Senate, I have had the good fortune to visit many schools in the district and look forward to meeting many more students, parents and teachers. Best wishes as you and your family enjoy the promise and excitement of a new school year!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature of John Pappageorge in black ink.

John Pappageorge  
State Senator  
13th District

"We are committed  
to ensuring  
Michigan's children  
receive the best  
education we  
can provide."

State Senator  
John Pappageorge





## PAPPAGEORGE SUPPORTS HEALTH CARE REFORM

Rising health care costs are draining the budgets of many school districts. Health insurance rates have increased by double-digits each year from 2000 to 2006. Senate Republicans have sponsored legislation that would save school districts millions of dollars through sensible reforms.

- Senate Bills 418-421 would reduce the cost of health benefits for school districts and other public employers while maintaining excellent benefits for the employees. The legislation would allow school districts to pool medical, dental and optical benefits and require increased access to claims and other data to create the insurance pools. While participation in the medical pools would be voluntary, schools would be required to competitively solicit four bids for fully insured coverage. Through competitive bidding and pooling, school districts could save about eight percent a year without reducing health care benefits or coverage.
- Senate Bill 547 would require new school employees to work a certain number of years before receiving retirement health care. The bill also sets up a graded system for retirement health care benefits, much like the system established for new state employees. This plan is estimated to save our schools a minimum of \$59 million in the first year alone. The bill has passed the Senate and awaits action in the House.

These reforms will help keep more taxpayer dollars in the classroom. Having more money available to educate our children helps alleviate the threat of layoffs and reductions of school programs.

## New requirements aim for success

Ready, set, learn! This fall's freshman class enters high school with new, more demanding graduation requirements in place. The rules will help students gain the knowledge and skills necessary to be better prepared for the rigors of college and the 21st Century workplace.

New requirements that affect the graduating class of 2011 include:

- Four years of English
- Four years of math
- Three years of science
- Three years of social science
- One year of physical education and health
- One year of fine or applied arts
- One online learning experience



Starting with the class of 2016, students will also be required to have two credits of a foreign language, fulfilled any time between kindergarten and graduation.

Parents who have concerns about the new rules can contact the school for more information about different routes to achieve the same goal of a rigorous curriculum.

## Business tax credit encourages donations to public education

Businesses, small and large, can now donate directly to a public school foundation and receive a tax credit equal to 50 percent of the amount they donated throughout the tax year. The credit cannot exceed 5 percent of the taxpayer's tax liability or \$5,000, whichever is less.

A section of the new Michigan Business Tax provides an incentive for Michigan businesses to donate to their local schools and public education. The "Education Foundation Tax Credit" expands the current community-foundation tax credit to include donations to education foundations.

The credit enables businesses to direct additional money to the classroom, allowing school districts in their own communities an opportunity to raise money for educational programs and projects they could not afford otherwise.





## Pappageorge supports common calendar

**S**chools could save money by sharing more services under legislation passed by the Senate. Senate Bill 549 would require schools in an intermediate school district (ISD) to adopt the same calendar beginning in July 2008, including dates for the winter holiday break, spring break and professional development days.

A common calendar allows schools to save on costs such as food services, transportation, technology and human resources. It also helps save on special education and vocational education costs.

Reducing administrative costs helps put more money back into the classroom. The bill awaits consideration in the House.

## New HS test benefits students

**T**his spring, high school juniors left the MEAP test behind in favor of the new Michigan Merit Exam (MME). This new exam was designed to better measure college and workplace readiness. The MME has several advantages over the old MEAP test, including:

- A free ACT college entrance exam score that can be used to apply to college.
- A free WorkKeys assessment that connects work skills, training, and testing to improve a student's education and job opportunities.
- Michigan assessments that measure what a student knows in core areas not covered in the ACT and WorkKeys.

The MME provides valuable information on a student's academic progress. In addition, students passing the MME are eligible for the \$4,000 Michigan Promise scholarship. For more information, including test results and practice tests, please visit [www.mi.gov/mme](http://www.mi.gov/mme).

## \$ \$ \$ \$ SCHOOL FUNDING \$ \$ \$ \$

### Fast facts:

- Michigan dedicates 31.4 percent of the state budget to education funding, ranking second among all the states.
- In 2006, the Michigan Lottery transferred \$688 million to the state School Aid Fund.
- Michigan taxpayers support nearly 1.7 million K-12 public school students.
- The current make-up of the School Aid Fund was created by Proposal A. It's made up of 4.4 cents of the 6-cent sales tax plus money from other sources such as property tax, income tax, lottery, etc.



### History

Educating our children is a top priority for me and my colleagues in the Michigan Legislature. In fact, K-12 education is the single greatest expenditure in the state budget. Even during tough economic times, we have put heavy emphasis on quality education. In the 2006-07 fiscal year alone, K-12 spending totaled \$13.1 billion out of a \$41.4 billion state budget.

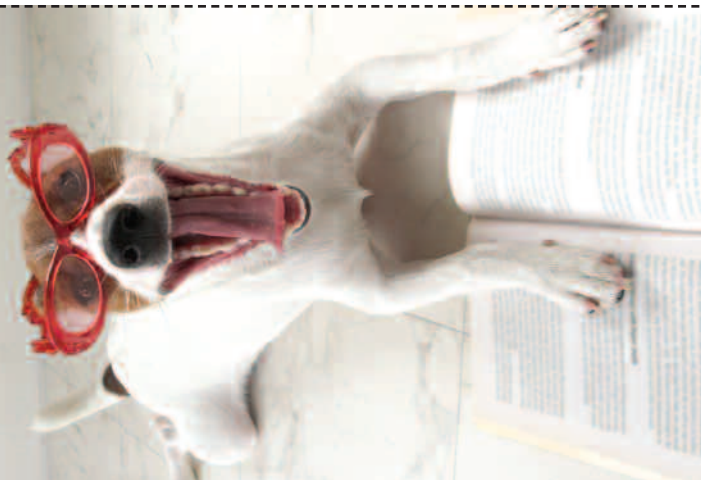
<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>K-12 Appropriations</u>
FY 2000-01	\$10,892,285,000
FY 2001-02	\$11,430,146,400
FY 2002-03	\$11,085,138,100
FY 2003-04	\$12,424,969,000
FY 2004-05	\$12,527,440,100
FY 2005-06	\$12,700,614,500
FY 2006-07	\$13,008,200,100

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STATE SENATOR

**John Pappageorge**

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## RESOURCE GUIDE FOR PARENTS

**Michigan School Report Cards**  
<https://oeaa.state.mi.us/ayp/>

**School Matters** (Analysis of School District Performance)  
[www.schoolmatters.com](http://www.schoolmatters.com)

**School Violence Hotline**  
1-800-815-TIPS • [www.michigan.gov/safeschools](http://www.michigan.gov/safeschools)

**Cyber Tip and Internet Crimes  
Against Children Hotline**  
1-877-529-2373

**Michigan Department of Education**  
[www.michigan.gov/mde](http://www.michigan.gov/mde)

**New High School Graduation Requirements**  
[www.michigan.gov/highschool](http://www.michigan.gov/highschool)

**Michigan E-Library (MeL Kids)**  
[www.mel.org](http://www.mel.org)

**U.S. Government Kids' Site**  
[www.kids.gov](http://www.kids.gov)

**MI Child** (Health Insurance for Uninsured Children)  
1-888-988-6300

**Michigan Promise Scholarship**  
[www.michigan.gov/promise](http://www.michigan.gov/promise) • 1-888-447-2687

**Michigan Education Trust**  
[www.michigan.gov/setwithmet](http://www.michigan.gov/setwithmet) • 1-800-MET-4-KID

**Michigan Education Savings Plan**  
[www.misaves.com](http://www.misaves.com) • 1-877-861-MESP

## Free Publications Available

The return of the school year provides a great opportunity to teach our leaders of tomorrow the importance of civic education. In my office, I maintain a collection of publications to help teachers, students and their families learn about the Michigan Constitution, the legislative process and the organization of state and local government. If you are interested in receiving this material, please fill out the order form below and return to my office. Or visit my online office at [www.SenatorJohnPappageorge.com](http://www.SenatorJohnPappageorge.com).

- ☐ Michigan Constitution ☐ For the People, By the People ☐ Citizen's Guide to State Government  
☐ The Legislative Process in Michigan, A Student's Guide

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